

Lev 26:3 to 27:24 Torah Reading (Parshat BeChuko-tai)
English version to be sung to the Torah tropes by Len Fellman
Latest version May 12, 2020

26:3 [If by My laws] you do walk, and My commandments you observe, and you practice them,
4 I will bring forth your rains in their time. [You will get] from the land its produce. Each tree of the field will yield its fruit.
5 Then will last [for you] [the time of threshing] [until the grape harvest]; [the grape harvest will last [until planting time].
[You shall eat] your bread [till you are full], [end aliyah] and dwell securely in your land.
6 [I will grant] peace [in the land]. [You will lie down] [with no one] to frighten you.
[I will take away] the beasts that do evil [from the land]. The sword will not pass through your country.
7 You shall pursue your enemies: they will fall before you by the sword.
8 In pursuit, [among you] just five [will chase a hundred], and a hundred of you, a thousand will pursue,
[and they will fall]—[these enemies of yours]—before you, by the sword.
9 [I will turn My face] [to you] and make you fruitful; make your numbers increase, [end aliyah] thus upholding My covenant with you.
10 You will eat your fill of the old harvest, [the oldest stored], [and the old grain], for the sake of the new, you will clear out.
11 I will set up my dwelling in your midst. Not scorned by My soul will you be.
12 I will walk in [the midst of you], and I will be for you a God, and you will be My people.
13 [I am indeed] YH[WH your God]—the one [who brought you] out from the land of Egypt:
[from being to them], slaves. I broke the bands [of your yoke], and led you forth, [with your heads held high].
14 But if you don't listen to Me; if you fail to observe all of these commandments,
15 If My laws you should spurn—My judgments abhorred by your souls—
[so that you fail] to keep all My commandments, thus breaking My covenant,
16 [Then will I] do [the same thing to you]: I will bring [upon you] anxiety, depression, and fever, longing to your eyes,
and grieving to the soul. [You will sow] in vain your seed: it will be eaten [by your enemies].

26:17 [I shall set] my face [against you]. [You will be struck down] in the face of your foes.
 Oppressed you will be [by your enemies]. You shall flee when no one pursues you.
 18 [If even after these] you do not listen to Me, [I will go on] chastising you, sevenfold [for your sins].
 19 I will break the pride of your power. [I will make] your heaven like iron, and your earth like copper.
 20 Spent in vain will be your strength. [There will yield not] your land its produce. The trees [of the land] will not give forth their fruits
 21 [If you go on] [with Me] in defiance, and are not willing to listen to Me, [I will multiply] [upon you] afflictions—sevenfold, for your offences.
 22 I will unleash upon you [wild beasts] of the field, [and bereave you] of your children,
 destroying your livestock and reducing your numbers, [and making desolate] your roads.
 23 [If after all these things], you do not accept discipline from Me, and you go on with Me in defiance,
 24 [then I shall go on]—[yes, I Myself]—[will go on with you] in defiance.
 [Then I will in turn] [strike you]—[I will again]—sevenfold for your offences.
 25 I will bring against you [an avenging sword] that will inflict [the vengeance of the covenant],
 [and you will huddle] in your cities. [I will send] a pestilence against you, [and give you over] to your enemies.
 26 [I will break off] [your supply of food]—[“the staff of bread”]. [And they will bake for you]: ten women [will bake your bread]
 in an oven—[in just one stove]—and dole out your bread by weight. [You will eat] but not be satisfied.
 27 [And if through all of this] you still do not [listen to Me], and go on with Me in defiance,
 28 I shall go on with you [in the heat of defiance]. [I will discipline] you—[even I]—sevenfold, [for your offences].
 29 You will eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters, you will eat.
 30 [And I will destroy] [your lofty high places], [and cut down] your [incense stands],
 [and I will put] your corpses on top of the corpses of your fetishes. Repelled by My spirit, [you shall be].
 31 [I will turn] your towns into ruins, [and lay waste] your holy shrines. I will not savor the fragrances [that would appease Me].
 32 So desolate will I [make the land], that appalled [by it] [will be your enemies] who dwell within it.
 33 And you I will scatter [among the nations]. I will unsheath against you the sword.
 [Then will become] the land a desolation, [and your cities] [will be a wasteland].

26:34 [Then indeed] will enjoy the land [its sabbath years] [during all] the days it is desolate, [while you] are in the land of your enemies.
 [Only then] [will there be a rest] for the land, and it will enjoy its sabbatical years.
 35 All the days of desolation, it will rest, [even though] [it truly could not] [observe sabbath rest] [in *your* sabbath years], when *you* dwelt upon it.
 36 [As for those left] [among you], [I will bring] faintness [into their hearts] in the lands of their enemies. Pursued [they shall be]
 [by the sound] [of a mere leaf] that is rustling, [and they shall flee] [as in flight from the sword], [and will fall], with none pursuing.
 37 [And they shall fall]—[each one over his brother], [as before the sword], [though pursuer] there is none.
 [It will not be possible] for you [to stand your ground] in the face of your enemies.
 38 [You shall perish] [among the nations]. It [will consume you]—the land of your enemies.
 39 [Those remaining] [among you] [will rot away] in their iniquity, in the lands of your enemies.
 [This also because] of the iniquity of their fathers: with them you will rot.
 40 [They will confess] their guilt and the guilt of their fathers, [in their breaking faith], [as they broke faith] with Me,
 [and also in] that they went on with Me in defiance.
 41 [So too, I Myself] [will go on] with them in defiance, and [I will bring them] into the land of their enemies.
 [Then humbled] [they shall be] in their hearts, [that are uncircumcised]. And then they will accept their guilt.
 42 [Then I will remember] My covenant with Jacob, [and I will remember] My covenant with Isaac,
 and [also My covenant] [with Abraham] I will remember. And the land I will remember.
 43 [Indeed, the land] will be forsaken of them, [having enjoyed] [its sabbath years] [while it was desolate] [without them],
 [and they will accept] their guilt, on account of the fact that My laws they rejected, and My statutes were abhorred by their souls.
 44 And yet, [even with all of this], [when they find themselves] in the land [of their enemies], [I will not reject them],
 [and will not scorn them], [to put an end to them]: to void My covenant with them, [because indeed], I am YHWH their God.
 45 I will remember for them the covenant [of the first ones]—the ones [whom I did bring out] from the land of Egypt
 [before the eyes] [of the nations], [that I] [should be for them] *Elohim*. I am YHWH.
 46 [So what you have just heard] [are the laws] [and the judgments] and the instructions
 [that were given] by YHWH [between Himself] and the children of Israel [end aliyah] on Mount Sinai, [through the hand of Moses].

27:1 (Then spoke YHWH) to Moses saying:

2 [You must speak] to the children of Israel and say to them: “[Any man]—when he makes a vow, in the value fixed for persons, to God:

3 It will be that the equivalent for a male from the age of twenty years to the age of sixty years—
[thus will] [be the assessment]: [fifty shekels], in shekels of silver, the coin of the sanctuary.

4 If a woman it should be: thus is the assessment: thirty shekels.

5 From the age [of five years], [up to] age [twenty years], thus [is the assessment]: [if it is a boy], twenty shekels, but for a girl—ten shekels.

6 Starting [at the age of one month], [up to] age [five years], this is the assessment for a boy: five shekels of silver,
[and for a girl] the assessment is three shekels of silver.

7 [Now if a person] is age [sixty years] or over—for a male, this is the assessment: five and ten shekels, and for a woman, ten shekels.

8 If one is too poor [to meet the assessment], [that one must be stood] before the *cohen*. (Then must the person be assessed by the priest.
[According to what] [can be] attained [at the hand] [of the vowing one]—[that much shall be assessed] by the *cohen*.)

9 [If it is an animal] [of the type that] [there may be brought forth], [one such as it] as an offering to YHWH,
[then any part of it] that is donated [from the beast], to YHWH [shall be holy].

10 [He shall not] [exchange it] [and he shall not] [substitute for it]—a good one for a bad one, [or a bad one] [for a good one].
[But if he *does*] replace one animal for another one, then both it and its replacement shall be holy.

11 And if [it is an animal] that is *tamei* (unclean)—[it being of such a type] [that one may not bring] [from such a beast] an offering to YHWH,
(then one must set the animal) before the priest.

12 An assessment by the priest [shall be made for it]: [whether it is good], or whether it is bad.

(As per the assessment by the priest, so shall it be.)

13 [If he truly wants] [to redeem it], he must add a fifth of it to the appraisal.

14 [If there be a man] who consecrates his house as holy to YHWH, [it shall be assessed] by the priest, whether it is good or whether it is bad.
As per the assessment [of the house] by the priest, thus shall it stand.

15 [But if he who consecrates it] [wishes to redeem] the house,
[then he is to add] [a full one-fifth] [of the money of the estimate] [end aliyah] to the value, [and it shall be his].

27:16 [If a man takes anything] from the field [of his property], [to be consecrated] [by the man] to YHWH, then you will make your assessment [according to] its seeding, [an area seeded] by a *chomer* of barley (about 58 gallons) at fifty shekels of silver.

17 If it is as of the year of the jubilee, that he consecrates his field, [then your assessment] shall stand.

18 [But if it is after] [the year of the jubilee] that he consecrates his field, then reckoned for him by the priest [is the value in silver] according to the years that still remain until the year of the jubilee, thereby reducing its value.

19 [If he would in fact] redeem the field—[he who has consecrated] it—
[then he is to add] [a full one-fifth] [of the money of the estimate] to the value, [and it shall revert to him].

20 [But if he does not] redeem the field, and he had sold the field to some other man, [then it can be redeemed] no longer.

21 Then will the field—[when it goes free] [in the *yovel* (jubilee)] [be consecrated] to YHWH, like a field [laid under a ban].
[end aliyah] [To the priest] will go his property.

22 If it is a field he has bought, [it being one] that is not of the fields that he owns, that he consecrates to YHWH,
23 [then reckoned for him] [by the priest] will be an assessment of its value remaining till the year of the jubilee.
[He shall give] [the assessed value] on that day: [a sacred donation] to YHWH.

24 [In the year] of the jubilee will revert the field to the one who sold it to him, [to him whose it was], as his holding of the land.

25 [All your appraisals] shall be by the shekel [of the sanctuary] (about 0.8 oz.), there being twenty grains (*gerahs*) to one shekel.

26 [However, one first-born]—[one marked] as first-born to YHWH—[among the animals], not to be consecrated by a person [shall it be],
[whether it be an ox] or a sheep, to YHWH it belongs.

27 If the animal is *tamei* (unclean), [he shall redeem it] [at your assessment], adding a fifth part to the value.
If it is not redeemed, it shall be sold at your appraisal.

28 However, [anything under a ban] that [has been proscribed] by a man, for YHWH [from whatever is his], [whether of humans] or of animals or of the field of his holding, shall not be sold, and shall not be redeemed. [All that is proscribed]—[end aliyah] holy of holy it is, to YHWH.

29 [Anyone that is proscribed]—[one who has been] [laid under the ban] among humans, may not be ransomed.
[Put to death], [he must surely be].

27:30 All tithes of the land of the seed of the land, or the fruit of the trees, to YHWH they belong. They are consecrated to YHWH.
 31 [Now if] [one wants to redeem]—[a man would redeem] [such tithes], [its fifth part] must be added to it.
 32 All tithes of cattle and of sheep, whatever passes under the staff, [every tenth one] shall be holy to YHWH.
 33 [But he is not to] make a distinction between good ones and bad ones; he shall not replace it.
 [But if he does in fact] [exchange it], [both the original one] [and its replacement] [shall be holy]. [They cannot be redeemed].
 34 These [are the *mitzvot*] (commandments) that [have been commanded] [by YHWH] to Moses for the children of Israel
 [end sepher melody] [on Mount] Sinai.
Chazak, chazak, ve nitchazeik.

Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some “poetic licence”, and some willingness on the part of the listener to be “carried” by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these “transtropilations” are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a “window” into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. “cut a covenant”) to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 “beam above the door” rather than “lintel”) to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between “literalness” and “listenable-ness”. A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh or yetiv kadma or pashta gersh gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana “lean toward” the words they “conjoin” to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, gersh, gershayim, and telisha gedola “lean away” from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* “rivi'i” melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the “grey bracket” device, I indicate the following pairs of tropes by “wrapping them around” the phrase which will have the combined melody:

mercha/tipcha ⏟Renew our days⏟	kadma/geresh (or: azla, etc.) ⏟She weeps bitterly⏟	mercha siluk ⏟a fire-offering to God⏟
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Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don’t strictly match the Hebrew. I also “pad” some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the *leyner*’s cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g’dola* (ר), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the musical phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalshelet*.)

“*Metigah-zakef*” is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

[Take heed—take care for yourself]

In some trope systems (notably cantor Moshe Haschel in “Navigating the Bible II”) this is given a very distinctive melody—for which purpose extra syllables fill out the musical phrase (as in “take care” in this example). Haschel’s system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don’t write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the *leyner* can choose to pronounce it as “God” or “Adonai”.

The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:

Aryeh Kaplan, ‘The Living Torah’ (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)
 Richard Elliott Friedman, ‘The Bible With Sources Revealed’ (2003)
 Everett Fox, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (1997)
 The Stone Edition ‘Tanach’ (1996)
 JPS ‘Hebrew-English Tanach’, (2nd Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, ‘Notes on the New Translation of the Torah’ (1969)
 Robert Alter, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (2004)
 Commentaries in the ‘Anchor Bible’ series
 Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)
 The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)
 The New King James Bible (1982)